

IN MEMORIAM: SUTOMO

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Sutomo, the Surabayan best known for his role as a *pemuda* leader during the early months of the 1945 revolution, died on October 7, 1981, while making the pilgrimage to Mecca. He was the last of the three national figures (the others being Sukarno and Hatta) who continued to be known publicly and affectionately as *bung*, the revolutionary sobriquet that carried with it feelings of comradeship as well as respect. To those who knew him, however, Bung Tomo embodied more than simple nostalgia, and he spoke to the end with a compelling and relevant voice . . . he was one of the few of his generation who remained roughly faithful to the spirit and ideals they helped fix in the national consciousness.

Sutomo was born in Kampung Blauran, in the center of Surabaya, on October 3, 1920. His father, Kartawan Tjiptowidjojo, an archetypical middle-class kampung family head, worked successively as a government clerk, an office staffer for a private company, an assistant in a government tax office, and a clerk in a Dutch import-export firm. He counted among his distant relatives close companions of Diponegoro, whom he believed to be buried in Malang, not in Makasar. Sutomo's mother came from a family of mixed Central Javanese, Sundanese, and Madurese descent. Her father had been a jack-of-all-trades and a municipal policeman, as well as a member of the Sarekat Islam, before moving to Surabaya and becoming the local distributor for the Singer Sewing Machine Company.

Young 'Tomo grew up in a home in which education was very highly valued, talk open and spirited, an individual's worth prized, and improvement through hard work always desirable. At the age of twelve, just as he was forced to quit MULO and take up a variety of menial jobs because of the impact of the Depression on the family's finances, Sutomo joined the KBI (Kepanduan Bangsa Indonesia) scouting organization. In later years he insisted that the philosophy of scouting, combined with the nationalist awareness he gained in this group and from his grandfather, were an excellent substitute for formal schooling. (He later completed HBS by correspondence but did not officially graduate.) At seventeen he found himself in the local limelight as the second Eagle Scout in the Netherlands East Indies, a rank reached by only three Indonesians before the Japanese occupation.

Dabbling successfully in journalism, joining a number of political and social groups, and enjoying a reputation as a bright young man with places to go, Sutomo was hardly an unknown when he was chosen in 1944 as a member of the Japanese-sponsored Gerakan Rakyat Baru. But nothing could have prepared him for the central role he played in October and November 1945, when Surabaya came under heavy British attack. He galvanized thousands of Indonesians to action with the distinctive, emotional speaking-style of his radio broadcasts, opening with the cry "Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar! Allahu Akbar!" Though the battle for Surabaya was lost, it was never forgotten. November 10, 1945, became a precious moment in the revolution, and was later celebrated as Heroes' Day. Bung Tomo and his Barisan Pemberontakan were imitated throughout the archipelago. But no one matched those clear, burning eyes, that penetrating, slightly nasal voice, or that hair-

raising oratorical style that was second only to Sukarno's in its emotional power. The famous photograph of Bung Tomo against the backdrop of a parachute spread against the sun, raising a defiant finger on high as he delivered a fiery speech, represented for many of those who took part--Dutch as well as Indonesians--the very soul of the revolutionary struggle.

After a modest and not entirely happy period of political activity in the 1950s, Sutomo emerged again as a national figure during the waning Sukarno era and the advent of the Suharto regime, which he initially supported. Beginning in the early 1970s, however, he found increasing cause to disapprove of some aspects of the New Order. Never one to understate or hold back his opinion, he spoke out and attracted admirers among college students, whom he came to know through his children and as a result of his own belated program of study at Universitas Indonesia. On April 11, 1978, he was detained by the government, no doubt out of fear that his extremely outspoken opposition to corruption and abuse of power might transform him anew into a popular figure among both youth and serious Moslems. He was not released until a year later. Although he emerged from jail in high spirits, he did not seem inclined again to raise his voice very loudly.

As often with public figures whose reputation is on the flamboyant side, much of the "real" Bung Tomo was elusive. He was no mere demagogue or romantic populist, and there was not a fanatic cell in his body. He could, however, turn on such characteristics at will for calculated effect. But in everyday life he was a thoughtful social and political moderate with an acute sense of justice, an instinctive dislike of *tekanan* (pressure, but here in the sense of suppression or oppression), regardless of its source. He was also an intellectual at heart and took knowledge seriously throughout his life. He saw to it that his five children had the opportunity to attend university, and he anonymously provided financial support to more than one youngster with the desire to learn but without the means to do so. He completed a draft of his own dissertation on the role of religion in village-level development shortly before his death.

He was, as well, a man of rather plain values and simple pleasures. An interested father, he remained close to his children and devoted to them in ways that are rare today in Jakartan "society." He took his Islam seriously, yet did not count himself among the would-be reformers or as a particularly religious person. He could--and loved to--talk energetically for hours, but seldom lingered for long on himself and his exploits in bygone days. He preferred to explore current events and their links to the past, rather than probing the past for its own sake. In recent years his attention was drawn to the problem of a just and humane development of Indonesia, but he took an interest in everything new. Though he possessed strong opinions on many matters, I never knew him to be prejudiced.

In short, Sutomo was both decent and true to himself, qualities which are not easy to come by anywhere these days. It was perhaps recognition of this Sutomo, as much as the Bung Tomo of 1945 renown, that compelled his family and friends to go to extraordinary lengths to have his corpse returned from the Holy Land to Indonesia . . . a highly unorthodox procedure. On February 3 of this year, after a brief stop in the capital, Sutomo was returned to his native city. Typically, he was not buried in the Heroes' Cemetery, though his reputation and military rank gave him that right. *Arek Surabaya* to the last, he was laid to rest in the public burial ground at Ngagel. Melancholy and in a certain sense ironic, this event marked the final passing of a generation.